

LTG Abdul Ghani al-Assadi

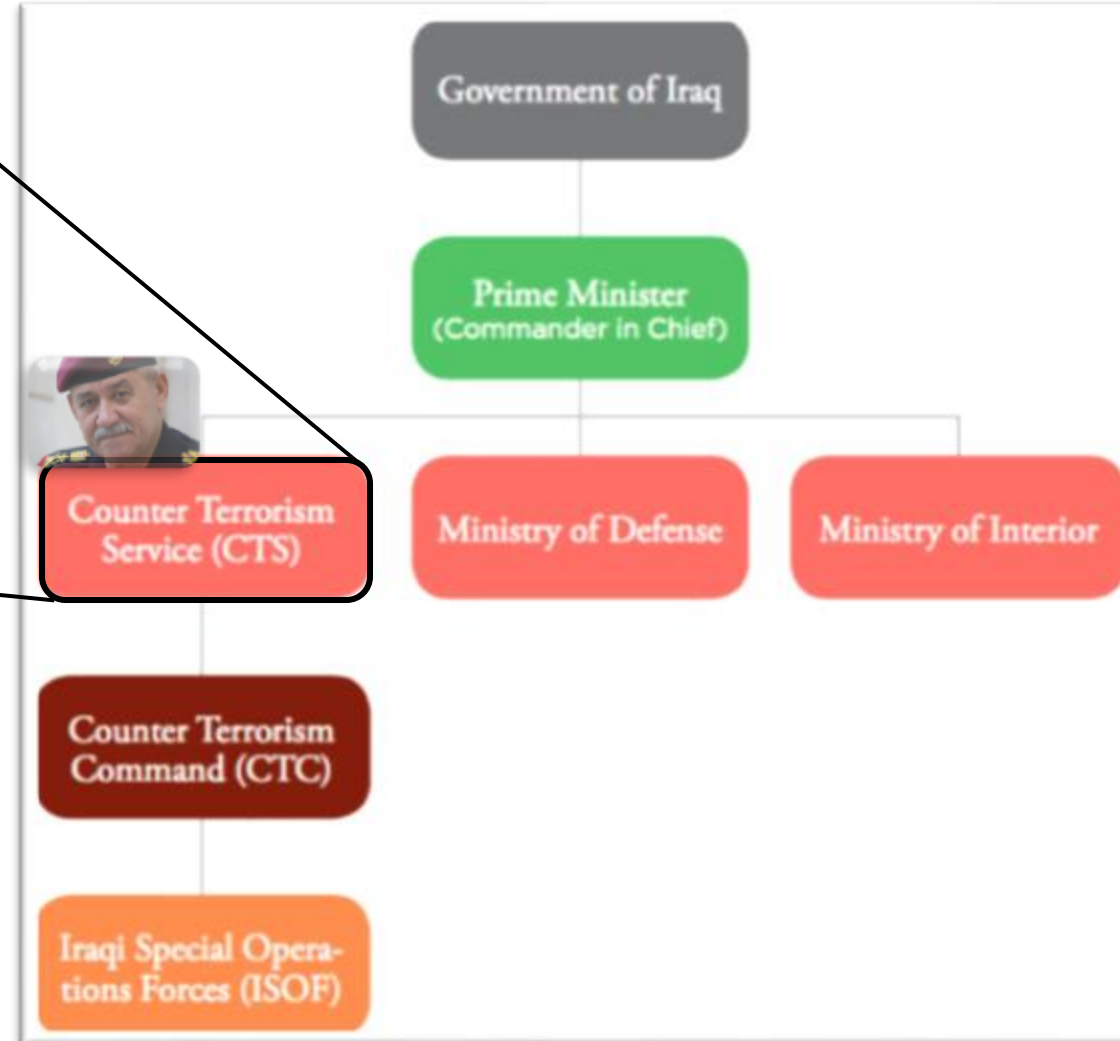
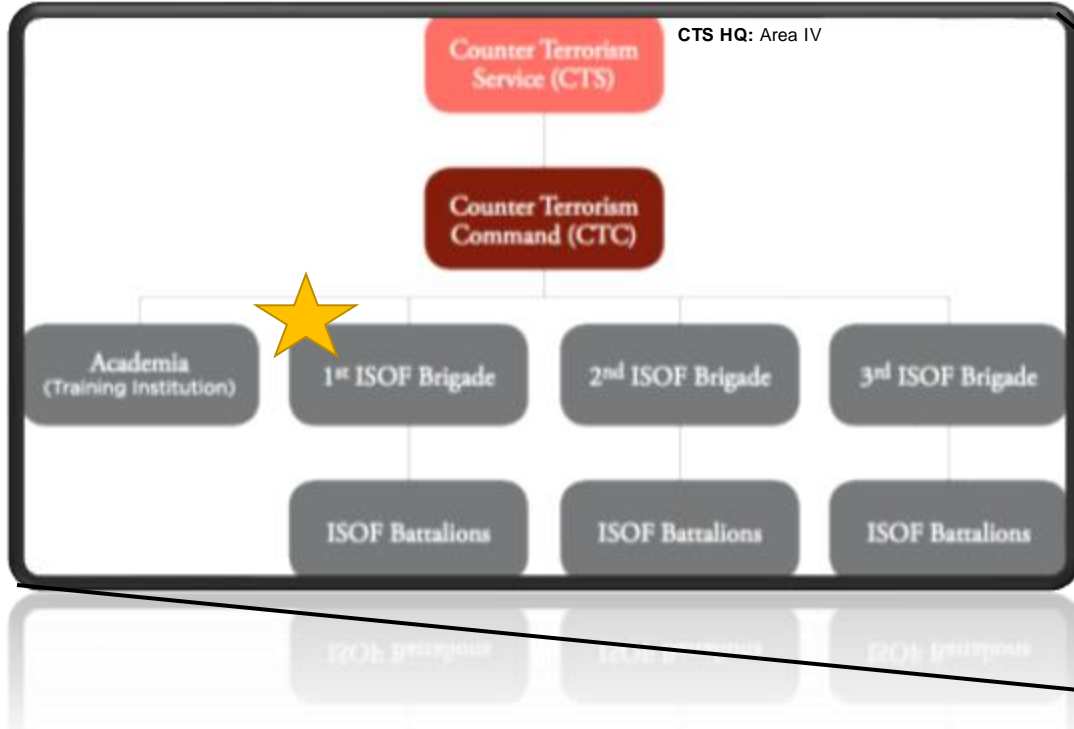
Read Ahead



Agenda

- Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service Summary
- Discussion Questions
- Between the Iraq Minister of Defense (MOD) and Iraq Minister of Interior (MOI) who will lead the border control mission and personnel?
- How does Barzani's Kurdistan Referendum influence Iraq?
- What security concerns will Iraq be challenged with during the upcoming elections.
- What Syrian Civil War outcome is best for Iraq's future?

Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service Task Organization



ISOF Brigades are headquarters which control the ISOF Battalions.

ISOF Battalions consist of between 440 and 600 personnel each.

Discussion Questions

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Between the Iraq Minister of Defense (MOD) and Iraq Minister of Interior (MOI) who will lead the border control mission and personnel?

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- Both the Minister of Defense and Interior positions in Iraq have been subjected to a degree of corruption and scrutiny since Iraq's 2003 liberation. However, the rise of ISIS in Iraq resulted in increased public resentment and distrust towards both organizations due to their inability to maintain security domestically. Most recently, Mohammed Salem Al-Ghabban, the most recent Iraqi MOI, resigned following the July 2016 ISIS Baghdad bombing. Following Al-Ghabban's resignation he departed with a word of warning concerning the Iraqi plagued security apparatus. Al-Ghabban said that Iraq has an overlap in jurisdictions between security forces outside his control - including reporting to two counterterrorism agencies, two defense ministry directorates and regional security commands - and his ministry's own counterintelligence efforts.
- There was an MOD/MOI debate concerning monetary resourcing in 2016. Notably a portion of the debate included Iraq's Counter Terrorism Service (ICTS) request for increased funds from the MOD. The Iraqi Parliament responded by elevating the ICTS status, establishing the ICTS as a ministry level position (equivalent to USSOCOM) with an independent budget and authority to establish their own intelligence department, pilot training program, and the authority to arrest and collect communications intelligence on suspected terrorists. Additionally, the Iraqi Parliament further separated the ICTS from the MOD, resulting in the ICTS earning their own individual annual budget.
- By the Iraqi parliament protocol the MOI has the responsibility of border control and management of the Department of Border Enforcement and the Ports of Entry Directorate personnel. However, in recent months both ministries have been active in lobbying regional allies in border protection assistance. On 18 July 2017, Iraqi MOI, Qasim al-Araji, met with Saudi MOI concerning border security support. A month prior, a report indicated that a high level meeting occurred between the Iraqi Ministry of Defense and a Syrian delegation concerning the Iraqi concern over its shared border with Syria and the ability to maintain its security.
- Most recent reporting indicated that the MOD is taking crucial steps towards solidifying a leading role in Iraq's border control mission. On 23 July 2017, Iraq's MOD, Irfan al-Hayali, signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Iranian MOD, Brig. Gen. Hossein Dehghan, concerning expansion, cooperation and exchange of experiences on combating terrorism and extremism, security of borders, as well as educational, logistic, technical and military support.

Analyst Comments

- Reporting suggests that the Iraqi Parliament has lost trust with the MOI in their ability to protect and secure Iraq's borders. The Parliament is most likely reforming the security apparatus giving the MOD increased responsibility, to include, border control and security control. Additionally, the parliament's action to give increased responsibility to the ICTS indicates reform within Iraq's counterinsurgency campaign. Iraq's parliament now has direct authority to use the striking arm of ICTS.
- **NOTE:** Qasim al-Araji likely has anti-American interests. A member of Saddam Hussain Army in 1984, fought in the Iran-Iraq War. During the Iran-Iraq War al-Araji was captured and pledged allegiance to Iran, resulting in him joining the pro-Iranian Badr corps. He has been a hard critic of the United States involvement in Iraq since the beginning of the War on Terror. Recent reporting also indicates Iran's desire to bring Erfan al-Hayali into the Iranian political sphere of influence.

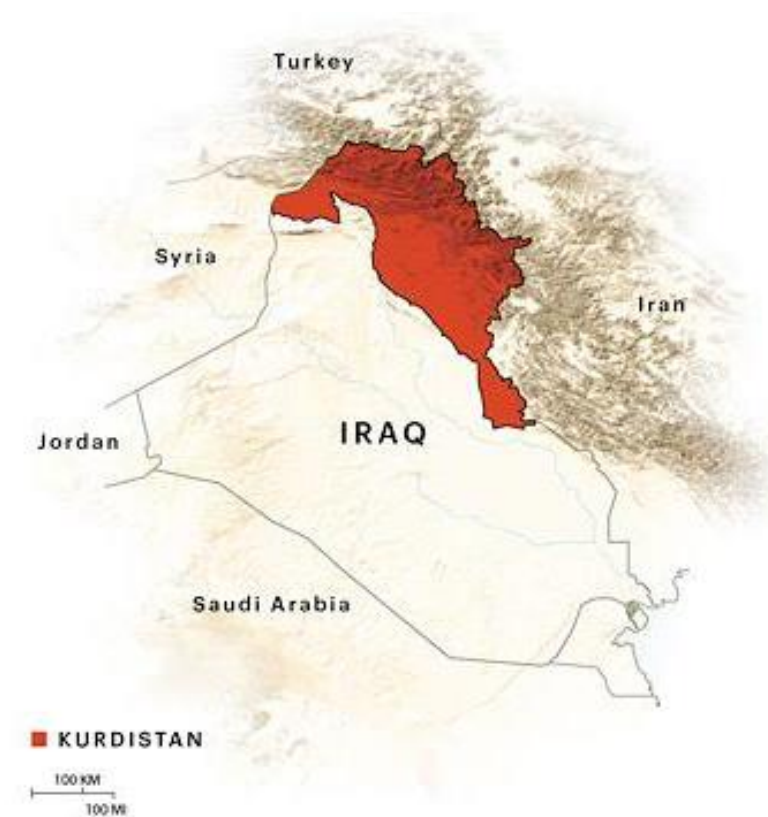
How does Barzani's Kurdistan Referendum influence Iraq?

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- On 7 June 2017, President of Iraq Kurdistan, Masoud Barzani, declared that the Kurdistan Democratic Party will present an independence referendum to occur on 25 September 2017 for vote.
- The independence referendum will be issued to Kirkuk, Makhmour, Sinjar and Khanaqin regions of Iraq.
- The majority of Muslims in Iraq are Shia, to include a majority of the governmental officials in Baghdad. The Iraq Kurdish population is predominantly Sunni.
- Iraq's Counter Terrorism Service has a 12 per cent composition of Sunni Kurdish fighters. While the Iraqi Parliament only has two ministers of Kurdish origin.

Analyst Comments

- It is not in the best interest for Iraq's security at this time to support an independence referendum from Iraq Kurdistan. An independence referendum from Iraq Kurdistan will disrupt Iraq's security and economic stabilization efforts, the return of displaced people from Turkey and Iran, and will distract the region's already disruptive internal political disputes.
- Despite attempts by the United States and allies to push the referendum to a later date, it is highly likely that Erbil will continue forward without the approval of the international community.
- It is highly likely that Erbil will receive a vote favoring the independence referendum. Baghdad will most likely discredit the independence referendum under unconstitutional values. Additionally, Iraq will state that the referendum is unilateral in nature, therefore, not credible.
- It is highly likely that Kurdish forces will revolt against Baghdad following their disapproval further escalating regional instability.



What security concerns will Iraq be challenged with during the upcoming elections?

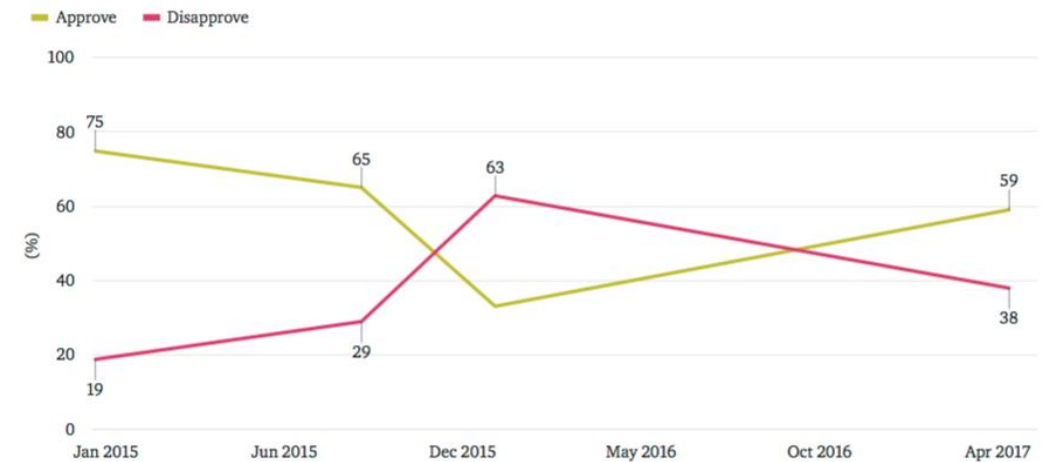
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- Reporting has indicated that Iraq's Parliament has agreed to delay provincial elections and hold them along with national parliamentary elections in April 2018. Iraq's Parliament has not officially announced the postponement of the provincial vote, which it had planned to hold on Sept. 16.
- Recent reporting has indicated that southern Iraq has taken the largest damage as the result of the ISIS counterinsurgency. Southern Iraq is currently absent of Iraqi security forces. As a result authority is found within local, extra-governmental armed groups, tribal militias, organized crime rings, and branches of the Hashd ash-Shaabi militias, especially Iranian-backed groups such as Asaib ahl al-Haq, Badr, Abu Khataib Hizballah, and Muqtada as-Sadr's Sarayat as-Salaam.
- Militias do not envisage a resurrection of the Iraqi state, since a stronger state—that holds a monopoly over the use of force, is the principal service provider, and constrains patrimonial networks based on sect and tribe—weakens many of the militias significantly.
- Muqtada al-Sadr has been an active dissident towards Nouri al-Maliki and current Iraqi Administration. Sadr is capable of organizing Iraq's large lower-class base against as he did May 2016, when his followers sacked government buildings in the Green Zone twice and reached the brink of a confrontation with rival Shia militias.

Analyst Comments

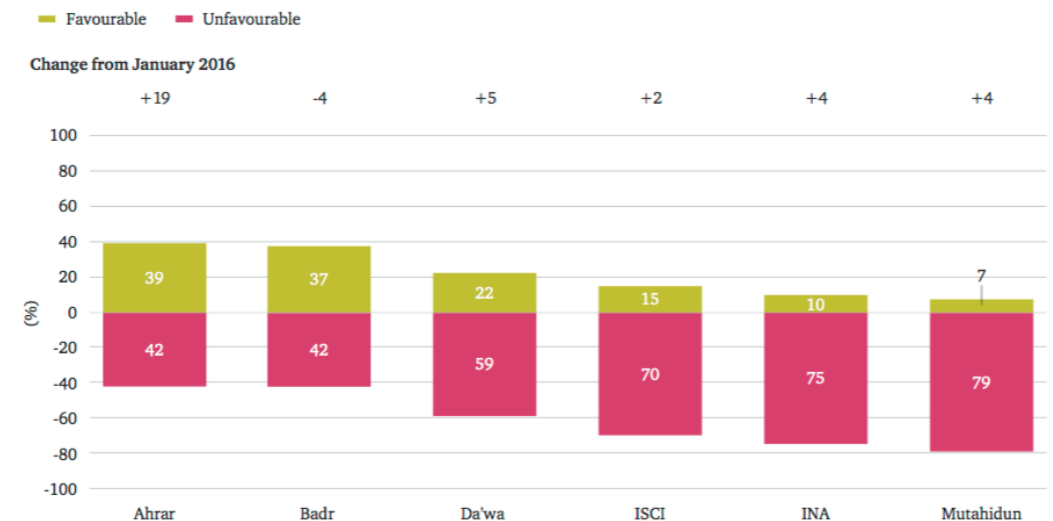
- Shiite militias who will not prosper within a stabilized Iraqi state will actively disrupt elections throughout Iraq, specifically within the southern provinces where they have the most command and control.
- Muqtada al-Sadr and his Sadrist followers will most likely disrupt elections through coordinated protests in order to push the Sadrist political platform for potential election support. The potential for protests to turn violent is high.
- Islamic State sympathizers will most likely disrupt elections through small scale coordinated attacks in an effort to spread fear within the populous to not participate in the elections.

Abadi approval ratings, January 2015 – April 2017



Source: National Democratic Institute (2017).

Political party ratings, April 2017



Source: National Democratic Institute (2017).

What Syrian Civil War outcome is best for Iraq's future?

MACRO

- Following a think tank composed of international academics and policy makers, it was decided that four potential outcomes exist for the Syrian Civil War.

(1) *Continued Low-Intensity Conflict Between Surviving Statelets*: Multiple semi-functioning nation-states rise within Syria. Alawite state run by the Assad regime that stretches from Damascus to the Mediterranean coast in the west, a Kurdish state in the far northeast, a moderate Islamist state that controls the area between the outskirts of Damascus and the Israeli border, and an ISIS emirate the spans from Aleppo to the Iraqi border.

(2) *Assad Regime Victory*:

(3) *Assad Regime Collapse*:

(4) *Diplomatic Settlement*:

Analyst Comments

- The civil war continues to be largely muddled affair with Assad recently gaining the initiative against the Free Syrian Army with Russian, Iranian, and Hezbollah assistance. Iraq does not openly support Assad however they are more concerned that continued conflict leads to des tabilization in the region and safe haven for Sunni insurgents to rebuild and threaten Iraq again.